Kavita Kane as a Postmodern Novelist

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Broad Topic **: Indian English Literature**

Title of the Topic **: Kavita Kane as a Postmodern Novelist**

Introduction :-

If we peep into the history of Indian English Literature, one can divide the period since 1930s to the present day into two phases. The Modernist phase and the Postmodernist phase. Modernist phase begins with Raja Rao and Postmodernism with Salman Rushdie. Before the beginning of the Modernist phase, there is a phase of 'imitation' where Indian writers imitated the English writers in many ways. But post 1930s, it was 'creative' in its real sense.

During the preliminary years of Indian English writing, the premier kind was poetry. It was followed by other kinds especially drama. Though its growth in later years crushed that of most other forms, fiction was actually the last to arrive on the Indian English literary scene. Indian fiction in English, like other branches of Indian English literature, originated and grew up under the wings of the British.

The first Indian English novel by Bankim Chandra Chaterjee is *Rajmohan's wife* is serialized in Calcutta Weekly, The Indian Field in 1864. It appeared as a book in 1935. Interestingly, there was early appearance of women novelists like Raj Lakshmi Debi's *The Hindoo Wife or The Enchanted Fruit (1876);* Toru Dutt's unfinished novel, *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden (1878)*. The early Indian novelist of 19th century are deeply influenced by the Gandhian movement. It was the time where Indian English novel got most significant theme such as the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the economically exploited etc. K.S.Venkataramani's novel, *Murugan The Tiller* (1927) was the first to come up under this influence.

Beginning of 20th century witnessed a gradual growth of fictional form. Anand's *Untouchable*(1935) and *Coolie*(1936), Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *The Bachelor of Arts*(1936), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* marked the beginning of the solid Indian English fiction. The great trio R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand have won recognition at home and abroad in 1960s and 70s. They paved the way for the coming generations. The tradition became rich in the hands of Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Ruskin Bond, Ruth Prawer Jabwala, and many more. Indian English writer used 'fiction' as a genre to its full range in all the phases.

After the independence of India, the tradition of social realism established earlier on a sound footing by Mulk Raj Anand was continued by novelists like Bhabani Bhatacharya, Manohar Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh, who made their appearance during the nineteen

fifties and the early sixties. By the end of the sixties and in the early seventies newer voices were heard, the most striking of them being Arun Joshi and Chaman Nahal.

A notable development was the emergence of an entire school of women novelists among whom the leading figures were Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai. Jhabvala's novels fall into two distinct and evenly matched groups- namely, comedies of urban middle class Indian life, especially in undivided Hindu families and ironic studies of the afore mentioned East-West encounter. The most distinctive feature of her novels is the subtlety with which she unravels the gossamer threads of intricate human relationships- especially among the women in the Hindu joint family. The nineteen fifties and sixties witnessed comparatively few novels by women. Among those are Lotika Ghose's *White Dawns of Awakening (1950)*, Mrinalini Sarabhai's *This Alone is True (1952)* and others. Among novels by women published during the nineteen seventies may be mentioned Kamala Das's *Alphabet of Lust (1976)* and Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli (1977).*

Apart from Bhattacharya and the other major novelists, there were few writers of fiction with a substantial corpus to their credit in the post- independence period. Ruskin Bond, an Anglo- Indian is one among them. *The Room on the Roof (1956), Love is a Sad Story (1975)* etc. are novels. He has written a number of books for children.

New novelists of the 1980s such as Upamanya Chatterjee have tried to demonstrate that, on the contrary, the Indian 'tang' is not a pure essence but the masala mix of a culture. That has always been able to appropriate influences from outside the subcontinent. Emergence of Magic Realism led to the weakening of the tradition of social realism. As M.K. Naik says, "Magic Realism is a jealous mistress, once you set up house with her, social realism becomes an unwelcome guest." Another trend is the translation of regional literatures into English. For example, almost the entire works of Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Subramania Bharathi, and Vasudevan Nair are available in English not only for the English people but also for the people of the world who have some knowledge of English as a second or foreign language. The contemporary fiction writers concentrate on the minute and subtle aspects of human behavior that makes the diasporic people experience a sense of alienation and being kept at a distance. Different writers have tried to bring out multiple shades of this experience. On the one hand, there are writers who concentrate on the diasporic experience at an alien place informing the supremacist attitude of the natives towards them. There are other writers who see this experience as an outcome of cultural interaction that facilitates the emergence of a universal civilization.

Another related aspect of postcolonial perspectives that marks the emergence of a different trend in Indian English fiction. Instead of presenting the British empire as the culture representing colonial oppression and the eastern culture, particularly Indian culture, as the other, the contemporary writers tend to bring out the internal contradictions of the national culture. Another trend is the emergence of writers from the Dalit and other marginalized sections of the society. Industrialization, urbanization, globalization and modernization constitute the minor themes recurrently and consistently treated in the Post-Independence Indian English novel. Recent Indian English novels employ a variety of experimental narrative techniques to present a wide range of subject matter.

Mythological Writers :

For most of the households in India, there was a time when sitting in front of the television and watching Mahabharata, Ramayana and any other retelling of mythological stories was almost like a family ritual. Mythological stories are popular in Indian societies. literary works adapted from mythology have gradually tapped into the bestselling lists. Mythological thrillers have become a genre in itself, with more and more writers giving wings, and words, to their imaginations. Devdutt Pattanaik in his *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata* (2011) and *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana* (2013) combining traditional ideas with the modern world. His works are known for being well-researched and for showing the age-old tales in a new light. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Her novel A *Palace of Illusions* (2008), retells the story of Mahabharata from Draupadi's point of view. Amish Tripathi is famous for the Shiva Trilogy. Ashwin Sanghi is known for combining history, theology and mythology for his works.

Pune based Indian English writer Kavita Kane born 5 August 1966 former journalist. She is an alumna of Fergusson College, Pune and has completed her post-graduation, both in English Literature and Mass Communication, from the University of Pune. She is known for writing Mythology-fiction. All of her books are based on Indian mythology. Her bestselling novel is *Karna's wife: the Outcast Queen*. She is an author of the new era of retelling. Karna's Wife her debut novel, was a bestseller. Her second novel - *Sita's Sister (2014)* also deals with another enigmatic personality - Urmila, probably the most overlooked character in the Ramayana. *Menaka's Choice (2015)*, another best-seller, is about the famous apsara and her infamous liaison with Vishwamitra the man she was sent to destroy. *Lanka's Princess (2016)* is her fourth book based on Ravan's sister, Surpanakha, the Princess of Lanka who was also its destroyer.

Postmodernism :

Postmodernism itself is a complex phenomenon as it is neither a complete rejection and nor acceptance of modernism. Actually, the term postmodernism is coincided with modernist Avant-grade movement. It is the beginning of the postmodernism. The term postmodernism is coined by the English historian, Philosopher Arnold J. Toynbee in 19th century. To refer to late 19th century, the time where western civilization, imperialism and capitalism began to decline.

Modernism projects the fragmentation and decenteredness, contemporary world as tragic. Laments on loss of the unity and center of life, where as in postmodernism fragmentation is no longer tragic, celebrate fragmentation, considers fragmentation and decenteredness as the only possible way of existence.

Oxford learners dictionary defines Postmodernism as "a style and movement in art, architecture, literature, etc. in the late 20th century that reacted against modern styles, for example by mixing features from traditional and modern styles"

The socio-cultural movement which shows a shift of perspective manifested in variety of disciplines including the Social Science, Architecture, Art and Literature. In all these fields there was shift in perspective that happened in late 20th century. Modernism is earlier aesthetic movement which was in fashion during early day of 20th century

Postmodernism refers to the experimental literary works after the World War II. Different scholars have different interpretations about defining the Postmodernism. Among them Jean-François Lyotard (French Critic), Jean Baudrillard (French Writer) and Jürgen Habermas (German Theorist) are considered as landmarks.

Lyotard's book *'The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge' (1973)*. and essay '*Answering the Questions: What is Postmodernism?*' (1992) gives the idea about term in detail. Where Lyotard gives importance to 'mini- narrative' and incredulity towards 'meta-narratives'.

Jean Baudrillard in his book *Simulations* (1919, translated 1983) talks about 'the loss of the real' says reality has been replaced by false images, to such an extent that one can not distinguish between real and unreal. This false image / unreal is called 'Hyperreality'.

One can see the following features in postmodern literature.

- A revolt against authority and signification.
- Use of new style of writing.
- Violation of the conventional rules of writing.
- Break away from the set trends.
- Blurring distinction between high and low culture.
- Celebration of fragmentation and dislocation.

- Self-reflexivity.
- Irony, Playfulness, black humor.
- Techno Culture and Hyperreality.
- Ambiguous endings etc.
- Intertextuality.
- Pastiche.
- Metafiction.
- Fabulation.
- Historiographic metafiction.
- Temporal distortion
- Magic realism
- Paranoia

The novels after 1980s have some features underlaying them, Such as the broadening of the thematic range, the shift of the 'locale' from the village to metropolis, social realism, mythical realism, magic realism, the bold depiction of love, sex and marriage, the role of religion and fanaticism, nihilism, absurdism, identity crisis, self-reflexivity, failure in human relationship etc. These are the post-modern elements in Indian English novel.

These features can be found in the postmodern novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Shobha Dey, Arvind Adiga. Along with these modern Indian writers some writers like Kavita Kane, Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Anand Neelakantan, Ashwin Sanghi who tries to retell the Indian epics, and Indian mythology with new perspective. Hence, the postmodern elements can be traced in the writing of these writers.

Hypothesis : -

The researcher hypothesizes that Kavita Kane's novel have postmodern elements incorporated in them. The themes and techniques employed are like Self-reflexivity, Irony, Playfulness, black humor, Intertextuality, Pastiche, loss of hope, identity crisis, self-discovery, over ambitions, shattered dreams, unstable faith and betrayal, along with this elements of New Historicism, Post Colonialism, feminism, Marxism, Psychoanalytic, Cultural Materialism and the postmodern elements incorporated in Kane's novels will be tested on the ground of its relevance and relation to postmodern period. The study aims at testing the hypothesis with suitable illustrations from the novels of Kavita Kane.

Objectives of the Study :-

- To explore what postmodernism and its study in Indian Context.
- To discuss and analyse Kavita Kane's novels to differentiate distinct fictional world portrayed by her and to show how she intermingles the versions of the image and the real.
- To differentiate the elements like fragmentations, rejection of authority, self-reflexivity, loss of hope, identity crisis, self-discovery, over ambitions, shattered dreams, and analyse how they have been grouped together in considering the thematic and structural networks of the novels.
- To relate the post-modern elements found in the novels with the form and techniques used by the novelist and explore the techniques of narration and formal structures in the novels from post-modern writer's point of view

Research Methodology :-

The methodology to be adopted for the research is descriptive, analytical and critical with the help of the various print and electronic primary and secondary sources of Kavita Kane. The data will be critically analyzed and evaluated by applying the understanding of the postmodern elements as seen in the selected novels of Kavita Kane.

The Scope and Limitations of Research :-

The scope of the present study has been restricted to the novels by Kavita Kane only. The novels have been analyzed from postmodern writer's point of view and studied to find out the postmodern elements in her novels.

The Novels Studied:

- The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen (2013)
- Sita's Sister (2014)
- Menaka's Choice (2015)
- Lanka's Princess (2016)

- ❖ The Fisher Queen's Dynasty (2017)
- ❖ Ahalya's Awakening (2019)

Tentative Chapter Scheme :-

Chapter One : Introduction

Chapter one is introductory in nature and talks about the concepts of Postmodernism and its elements. The chapter also elaborates Kavita Kane as an author of literary pieces. It throws light on her literary career as well as the other traits she has developed. The chapter also gives introductory remarks about Kavita Kane contribution to Indian Writing in English.

Chapter Two : Elements of Postmodernism in *Ahalyas's Awakening and Menaka's Choice*

This chapter is devoted to the study of two novels by Kane, *Ahalya's Awakening* is about the story of the. Ahalya, created by Brahma, was the most beautiful woman to exist and was married to a much older sage Gautama. How Indra seduced her with treachery by disguising as her husband, leading to Gautama cursing her to become stone. There are several narratives of the same story with varying details but the gist remains that Ahalya was cursed for infidelity by her husband, while the blame was greater on Indra who tricked her into it. The myth basically states that women are a greater offender when it comes to adultery, rather than men. And *Menak's choice* about the craving for family. And story about ambitions of Vishwamitra to create another heaven.

The chapter aims to bring out the postmodern elements like Feminism, Psychoanalysis of the character, alienations, loss of hope, identity crisis, self-discovery, over ambitions, shattered dreams, Pastiche, unstable faith and betrayal as incorporated in the novels.

Chapter Three : Elements of Postmodernism in *Sita's Sister and Lanks's Princess*

This chapter explores the postmodern elements Sita's Sister and Lanka's Princess. Both the novel is based on Ramayana. Where *Sita's Sister* is about Urmila, and waiting for fourteen

years. And *Lank's Princess* is about the Surpanakha. Through the psychoanalytical lenses, critically analyses her 'repression, rage and revenge' by connecting the dots in her journey that shape her personality. The giving of voice to the 'unvoiced' through revisionist myth making in the novel and the evolution of 'Surpanakha' from 'Meenakshi' due to her experiences in the oppressive and suffocating environment.

The chapter purposes to bring out the postmodern elements like New Historicism, Post Colonialism, feminism, Marxism, Psychoanalytic, Cultural Materialism and the postmodern elements incorporated in the novel.

Chapter Four : Elements of Postmodernism in *The karna's wife : The Outcast's Queen and The fisher Queen's Dynasty*

This chapter covers the two novels by Kane from postmodern writers point of view. *The karna's wife : The Outcast's Queen* is about the Uruvi, and *The Outcast's Queen*, is about The Queen of Hastinapur, Styavati. She is despised and reviled in a palace, but she puts up with all of this because she has chosen to participate in the game of politics and accepts all of the consequences. The war was the culmination of an astute grand grandmother of the Kuru family's never-ending endeavors. Her development across time, through the eras, through hardships, and through challenges is vividly shown in the chapters. Her journey to womanhood was not an easy one, and her sufferings, obstacles, and difficulties caused her to become cold-hearted towards men.

The chapter goals to bring out the postmodern elements like Self-reflexivity, identity crisis, self-discovery, over ambitions, shattered dreams, unstable faith and betrayal, and other postmodern elements.

Chapter Five : Conclusion :

The final chapter presents the findings in the form of conclusions. Kavita Kane's works of fiction have all the elements of the postmodern writings. As the writer Kavita Kane is a

living writer the researcher intends to interview her to elicit her own views about her literary masterpieces.

Data, Scope and Limitations of Research :

The present study will be limited to the works of Kavita Kane published in English. All available print and electronic data will be used for the study. All published novels till date will be studied. The scope of this research is to investigate the postmodern elements as found in the novels of Kane. It proposes to study the postmodern elements in depth in the novels of Kavita Kane.

Pedagogical Implications :

The present study is focusing on the postmodern perspective in the novels of Kavita Kane. The study will provide a new direction to mythological and postmodern studies and will be useful to the learners of Indian writing in English. The novels can be prescribed for the study for their relevance and the treatment of postmodernism in them. The study could be of great help to the researchers on Indian English in Postmodern period.

Significance of the Research :

The present research work will be an attempt to discuss the fiction of Kavita Kane. In the paradigm of postmodernism. Her major works concentrates on characters from the Indian epics. To study and analyze the text with the new perspective that will contribute to branch of knowledge.

No work of this sort has been taken up at any level. Hence the raison deter for the personal study does exist.

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